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New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on further measures to strengthen United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith, for the consideration of the General Assembly, his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Further measures to strengthen United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development" (JIU/REP/2005/8).

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Summary

The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Further measures to strengthen United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development" (JIU/REP/2005/8) examines the role of the Economic Commission for Africa in coordinating the activities of United Nations agencies working in Africa for the purpose of providing system-wide support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the regional and subregional levels. The report provides specific and concrete recommendations on further measures to strengthen the United Nations system support to NEPAD.

The comments of the United Nations system organizations on the recommendations provided in the report are presented in the present note. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) member organizations. In general, CEB members concur with the recommendations put forward by the Joint Inspection Unit in the report and are of the opinion that the report has captured the main hindrances to effective collaboration of United Nations agencies in their support to NEPAD. The remarks provided by CEB members, however, also offer useful insights and nuances into the issues examined by the Joint Inspection Unit.

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Further measures to strengthen United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development" (JIU/REP/2005/8) examines the role of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in coordinating the activities of United Nations agencies working in Africa for the purpose of providing system-wide support for NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels. The report provides specific and concrete recommendations on measures to further strengthen the United Nations system support to NEPAD.

2. The review by the Joint Inspection Unit was initiated following a proposal by ECA, that the existing inter-agency arrangements for coordination among United Nations agencies at the regional level be examined with the view to identify factors that inhibit effective coordination and to propose measures to enhance the effectiveness and impact of those arrangements on the work of the United Nations in Africa, and a recommendation by the Committee for Programme Coordination in 2004, that the United Nations system use existing coordination mechanisms at the global, regional and country levels to strengthen policy coherence in support of NEPAD. The comments of the United Nations system organizations on the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit are presented below. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) member organizations.

II. General comments

3. In general, CEB members concur with the recommendations in the report and are of the opinion that they are relevant to, and well aligned with, the issues and problems in the African region. Members expressed appreciation for the extensive manner in which the report deals with the relationship of ECA with African regional and subregional institutions, particularly with NEPAD as a programme of the African Union, and for the practical measures recommended to strengthen the collaborative work of United Nations agencies to enhance the partnership with the African Union. Members are of the view that the report is a useful reference document, especially in the context of the memorandum of understanding recently proposed by the African Union on its prospects for effective cooperation with the United Nations. Members further expressed the hope that the memorandum would offer an opportunity to address most of the issues concerning the African Union raised in the report.

4. Members are of the opinion that the Summary of the report, which provides the main findings and recommendations, is concise and underpinned by well-researched and objective observations and findings. Members are also of the view that the thematic options are clearly outlined, making it possible for partner organizations to easily identify, prioritize and act on the various options.

5. Members furthermore believe that the report has captured the main hindrances to effective collaboration of United Nations agencies in their support to NEPAD. They pointed out that factors that hinder or militate against effective collaboration include:

(a) The lack of capacity by NEPAD to provide leadership in determining the agenda of the regional consultations and the nature of support it requires from the United Nations system. As a result, there is a tendency for the United Nations to set the agenda and determine the priorities that are not necessarily aligned with those of NEPAD. CEB members in this regard pointed out that the Joint Inspection Unit could have put forward a recommendation on how the United Nations could enhance the capacity of the NEPAD secretariat to provide the necessary leadership;

(b) While NEPAD is a programme of the African Union, it operates independently and duplicates the programmes of the African Union. CEB members suggested that the implementation of recommendations 1 and 9 of the Joint Inspection Unit report hinges upon clarifying the relationship between the African Union and NEPAD;

(c) The differences in the mandates, programming cycles and resource levels of agencies have repeatedly been indicated as a serious obstacle. The idea of establishing a NEPAD support fund from which the various agencies could draw resources to finance joint NEPAD support programmes was therefore put forward. CEB members, in this regard, indicated that the Joint Inspection Unit could have provided a recommendation on the harmonization of mandate and programming cycles of the agencies, as well as on the establishment of a common financing mechanism for NEPAD support programmes.

6. While CEB members appreciate the generally helpful nature of the report, they also noted that it could have more critically examined the existing institutional arrangements for deepening collaboration and coordination among United Nations agencies working in Africa and more directly highlighted the issues affecting the effectiveness of existing United Nations regional coordination arrangements as stated in the objective of the report. Members furthermore argue that the report would have benefited from specific recommendations on improving inter-agency cooperation and collaboration in support for NEPAD.

7. CEB members observed that paragraph 19 of the report describes NEPAD as having been endorsed by the first African Union summit in July 2002, while paragraph 26 states that the decision to establish NEPAD was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in July 2001. Members are of the opinion that the latter event seems to have greater relevance in the life cycle of NEPAD, especially in the light of subsequent endorsements by the wider international community; this should be reflected consistently throughout the report.

8. CEB members further pointed out that annex III of the report, which provides information on the clusters/sub-clusters of the United Nations regional consultations on NEPAD, does not reflect all initiatives undertaken between the United Nations system and NEPAD. The Joint Inspection Unit could therefore have made a greater effort to provide a more comprehensive list.

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III. Specific comment on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to invite, on a regular basis, the African Union, including the NEPAD secretariat, to attend the annual consultations meetings, with a view to ensuring effective coordination and collaboration between the United Nations system organizations and the African Union.

9. CEB members expressed support for the recommendation, especially as it is understood that the annual consultation meetings had in the past taken place without representation from the African Union or the NEPAD secretariat. It was therefore emphasized that ECA should ensure that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Chairman of the NEPAD Steering Committee are invited to the seventh regional consultations expected to be held in October 2006. Such an arrangement would ensure that the African Union and NEPAD are kept abreast of the decisions taken by the annual consultative meetings. It was, in this regard, also pointed out that the Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa had attended the previous two regional consultations in 2003 and 2004.

Recommendation 2

The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to:

(i) **Conduct an independent study on the potential benefits of establishing regional and subregional hubs for United Nations system representation in Africa, as part of a concerted system presence strategy in Africa, taking into consideration different geographical configurations of the African regional and subregional institutions;**

(ii) **Review the institutional architecture of the United Nations system in Africa with a view to avoiding duplication and overlapping, cutting costs, and more generally, improving policy and operational coherence.**

10. Some CEB members welcomed this recommendation and pointed out that it could help support the ongoing efforts to optimize the presence of United Nations non-resident organizations in Africa. Others commented that establishing United Nations regional and subregional hubs seemed unrelated to the obstacles of coordination and delivering effective support to NEPAD, and that creating more players would be duplicative and create additional coordination problems.

11. Organizations suggested that the Joint Inspection Unit should have taken into account the essential role of ECA, assigned to it by various legislative bodies (that of coordinating United Nations support to NEPAD), and should have properly reflected its role vis-à-vis United Nations system regional and subregional hubs. In addition, members pointed out that given its regional mandate, ECA focuses on issues from a regional perspective, while the support mechanisms of its development partners within the United Nations system, in particular the specialized agencies, are basically sectoral and national based. Therefore, establishing a constructive liaison between the regional perspective of ECA, and the sectoral and national orientation of specialized agencies towards promoting development in Africa has proven to be a challenge.

Recommendation 3

The Secretary-General should direct ECA to conduct, in consultation with the African Union/NEPAD and as soon as possible, a review of the efficiency of the clustering arrangement as part of the annual consultations meetings stipulated in recommendation 1 and report back to him before the convening of the next annual consultations in 2006.

12. CEB members regarded this recommendation as important and noted that it hinted at a viewpoint that differed from the generally held opinion that the cluster arrangement was basically sound, even if it required fine-tuning. Organizations noted that while the cluster arrangements may have never worked as well as intended and that individual United Nations agencies generally reported on their achievements in implementing their own mandates at the clusters' meeting, they believed that the cluster approach was the most viable mechanism for concerted United Nations support in the implementation of NEPAD, as noted in the conclusions of the sixth regional consultations meeting held in July 2004.

13. Given the decision taken during the sixth regional consultation of United Nations agencies working in Africa to hold meetings twice a year, back to back with the African Union summit, organizations noted that the next annual consultations meeting was expected to be held in October 2006, and expressed concern about the timely feasibility of the recommendation, given its linkage to recommendation 1, the time needed for the finalization of the current report and its subsequent acceptance and adoption by the various United Nations agencies. Concern was also expressed about the feasibility of regional consultations twice a year and back-to-back with the African Union summit, since they have proved difficult to hold so far. CEB members pointed out that both proposals had huge cost implications that many agencies could not sustain and therefore suggested that the next regional consultations should re-affirm the annual meeting in Addis Ababa.

14. Furthermore, organizations noted that ECA had already taken action towards implementing the recommendation and had initiated a review of the existing clustering arrangements. The review would help in improving the existing clustering arrangement by establishing sound and realistic criteria for justifying each cluster and sub-cluster as well as proposing ways of rationalizing the clusters. The review was expected to be completed for presentation at the seventh regional consultations expected to be held in October 2006.

15. Organizations furthermore noted that the issue had been discussed extensively at the sixth regional consultations meeting convened by ECA in July 2004. The discussion was held against the background of an assessment paper prepared by ECA on major challenges facing the existing clustering arrangement. Participants at the meeting not only endorsed the clustering arrangement but also established a sixth cluster on advocacy, outreach and communication, which was soon followed by a seventh cluster on science and technology. However, because of resource constraints and/or programmatic reasons, some agencies had found it difficult to meaningfully contribute to the work of more than one cluster or sub-cluster. This was especially true for agencies dealing with cross-cutting issues such as the environment, human rights and HIV/AIDS.

16. Finally, organizations proposed that the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework process could be considered a

model for United Nations system support for NEPAD, given that such a system would ensure that organizations undertake activities in unison by pooling their resources. Organizations suggested that such a results-oriented approach, which has proven successful in bringing together United Nations agencies working at the country level, could, with some modification, be institutionalized at the subregional level. For example, ECA could undertake, through its subregional offices and in collaboration with United Nations country teams in the respective subregions, an analysis of the national common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework in order to identify areas of immediate priority where the United Nations system could collectively support activities concerning NEPAD that are deliverable in the short-term at the subregional level.

Recommendation 4

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should request the executive heads of the United Nations organizations concerned to ensure that only those officials responsible for regional consultations and coordination of activities related to NEPAD within their organizations are designated to attend the annual consultations meetings.

17. While CEB members generally supported the recommendation, they suggested that, in addition to Africa department heads, officials attending the regional consultations should also include department focal points responsible for the regional consultations and coordination of activities relating to NEPAD. The arrangement would allow for the annual regional consultations meeting to be preceded by a meeting of focal points which, at the expert and programmatic level, would then be in a position to better inform the decisions of the regional consultations, which were expected to endorse the proposed inter-agency arrangements and commit or earmark resources for joint implementation.

18. Organizations furthermore observed that, while the designation of dedicated officers to cover the regional consultations was desirable, it was not considered fundamental to the issue in question, particularly if there was good coordination within and among the agencies.

Recommendation 5

All the executive heads of the United Nations organizations concerned should ensure that the conveners of each cluster, in consultation and coordination with ECA and their concerned African institutional partners, establish a clear and predictable schedule of meetings for their clusters and sub-clusters and provide a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the decisions taken.

19. CEB members supported the recommendation and stressed that the conveners of cluster meetings should issue meeting schedules well in advance, in order to enable the agencies involved to incorporate the dates into their annual work plans. This was considered especially important, since some organizations belonged to more than one cluster and cluster meetings were in most cases held concurrently.

20. In this regard, it was reported that ECA would be communicating with all concerned agencies on the 2006 calendar of meetings and that it intended to request

all cluster and sub-cluster conveners to schedule at least one yearly statutory meeting in their official calendars of meetings. That would not only secure commitment and resources, but also ensure constancy and predictability of meetings. It would also make up for maintaining an annual regional consultations meeting instead of the two proposed at the sixth regional consultations. It was pointed out that the sequencing of those events would, however, have to be coordinated so as to meaningfully contribute to the regional consultations. It was also recalled (as already suggested in paragraph 13) that a proposal had been put forth to hold the regional consultations twice a year, back-to-back with the African Union summits, as a way of minimizing cost and securing alignment with the African Union.

Recommendation 6

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of CEB, should request the executive heads of the United Nations organizations concerned to ensure that each cluster give due focus to its work on a few joint United Nations regional and subregional programmes/projects, to be decided in consultation with the African Union, the NEPAD secretariat and other African institutional partners.

21. CEB members noted that the realization of the recommendation would go a long way towards ensuring that coordination and implementation of selected regional and subregional joint programmes/projects were mainstreamed into the regular work programme of all participating agencies with adequate resources. They pointed out that coordination and implementation of activities relating to NEPAD would then cease to be seen as ad hoc or additional tasks by the staff members and officials responsible.

Recommendation 7

The General Assembly and legislative bodies of all the United Nations organizations concerned should substantially increase their support for the clusters' agreed joint programmes/projects. CEB should provide a clear-cut policy directive to ensure consistency and effective implementation of this recommendation.

22. CEB members welcomed the recommendation and noted that it reinforced recommendation 6 above on implementation of joint United Nations programmes/projects. However, they suggested that the CEB might also wish to consider, in the policy directive, the level of resources allocated for Africa and in particular for joint United Nations regional and subregional programmes/projects in support of NEPAD.

Recommendation 8

The Secretary-General should take appropriate measures to enhance the human resources capacity within the ECA Office of Policy and Programme Coordination by seeking redeployment of staff from other United Nations agencies and entities in order to enhance the capacity of ECA to effectively and efficiently coordinate the activities of the United Nations agencies working in Africa as well as to keep in constant touch with the African regional and subregional entities.

23. CEB members generally supported recommendation 8, noting that the capacity of ECA to effectively coordinate the work of the clusters and provide oversight to the support of the United Nations system to NEPAD remained limited. Additional resources were therefore required to strengthen the leadership role of ECA in the coordination of the work of United Nations agencies in Africa. With adequate staff, complemented with financial resources, ECA should be able to move from being a mere convenor of regional consultations to a strategic coordinator and assume the role of secretariat, as well as to provide much needed oversight within the context of regional consultations.

24. Organizations noted that while paragraph 59 of the Joint Inspection Unit report presented secondment from other United Nations agencies as one way of providing additional human resources to ECA, secondment was embodied in recommendation 8 as the only way of enhancing its human resource capacity. Organizations believe the Joint Inspection Unit should have reconciled the two sections of the report and pointed out that there were many other ways to work together with ECA than just the detachment of United Nations agency officials, such as joint meetings and publications or the provision of technical comments.

25. Organizations moreover noted with appreciation the effort by the Joint Inspection Unit to bring to the fore, under recommendations 8 and 10, the issue of the capacity shortfall in coordinating the work of the various clusters and providing oversight to all United Nations support to NEPAD. They point out that strengthening the coordination role of ECA came out strongly during the visit of the Secretary-General's Panel on International Support to NEPAD in February 2006 to Addis Ababa, which concluded that ECA would require both financial and human resources.

Recommendation 9

The Secretary-General should ensure that all meetings convened by ECA within the framework of clusters arrangement are co-chaired by the representatives from the African Union Commission or the NEPAD secretariat, and that a mechanism for follow-up and implementation of all the decisions taken in those meetings be established as soon as possible.

26. CEB members were in support of the recommendation. They pointed out that, although having shown mixed results, such an arrangement was already in place and that ECA always ensured that the African Union NEPAD secretariat was involved in the preparation of cluster meetings. For various reasons, it had, however, not always been possible for the secretariat to attend all meetings. Organizations noted that what was urgently required was to establish a mechanism for follow-up and implementation of all decisions taken at cluster meetings. Such a mechanism could be agreed upon within the cluster or at the next session of the regional consultations.

27. CEB members also noted that United Nations result-based budgeting offered new opportunities for establishing the mechanism called for, or indicators of achievement. Furthermore, the recently proposed memorandum of understanding submitted by the African Union (see also para. 3) on the prospects for effective cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations offered even greater opportunities to establish formal mechanisms for coordinating collaboration between the two entities on a partnership basis.

Recommendation 10

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report to it no later than its sixty-first session on efforts and specific measures undertaken, including through support of other United Nations system organizations, to strengthen the capacity of ECA in coordinating the work of those agencies in Africa.

28. CEB members concurred with the recommendation and were of the opinion that the strengthening of ECA with adequate resources would enhance the effective coordination of United Nations system support to NEPAD.

29. As described in the introduction of the Joint Inspection Unit report, the recommendation by the Committee for Programme and Coordination for further strengthening of United Nations system support was part of the broader rationale for the Joint Inspection Unit review. Consequently, organizations suggested that the report of the Secretary-General requested in recommendation 10 should perhaps be broadened to cover all recommendations made in the report.

Figure 1
The role of ECA in coordinating the activities of United Nations agencies in Africa in support of NEPAD

30. While expressing their appreciation for the spatial relationship embodied in figure 1, CEB members also noted the need to clearly outline the specific administrative relationship between the African Union and NEPAD on the one hand, and the other organizations involved in this process on the other. It is suggested that such clarification would enhance coordination and the achievement of stated objectives.

Annex I
Examples of United Nations system regional/subregional presence in Africa

31. CEB members commented that annex I showed that some United Nations agencies had administrative responsibilities beyond the African region, with varying priorities. Members, therefore, suggested that there could be a need for a clearly outlined administrative framework to ensure that resources were adequately provided to address issues identified in and of relevance for Africa.